

VARIETY IN BIDS AT ROYAL AUCTION

Surprising Difference in the
Results in a Game at
Duplicate.

QUESTION OF THE BONUS

Nothing shows more clearly the value in bridge of mutual understanding, based on a sound system of bidding, than the results obtained by partners who continually play together. They get a working knowledge of each other's ideas and a line on what each would do under given circumstances, which those who are continually playing with comparative strangers cannot obtain. They can rely absolutely on the bids.

As an example, take the four or five leading scores made during the past season at the Knickerbocker Whist Club of New York. The men who made them played with one another, to the exclusion of others, on almost every one of the twenty-eight occasions that offered for competition. Here are the scores, which are interesting as giving a line on the percentage in favor of good play.

| Name | Games | Wins | Losses | Points |
|-------------------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| R. J. Lichtenberg | 28 | 13 | 15 | 409 |
| S. S. Lane | 24 | 10 | 14 | 412 |
| George Ridge | 24 | 11 | 13 | 418 |
| W. C. Whitcomb | 27 | 13 | 14 | 427 |
| S. S. Watson | 25 | 6 | 19 | 276 |
| J. Blaisell | 25 | 6 | 19 | 276 |
| G. M. Scott | 27 | 6 | 21 | 197 |

These games were of twenty-eight deals each, four against each adversary in a compass game of seven tables. That is, 784 deals, in which the four leaders, generally looked upon as the club team, gained an average of 452 in 107 games of twenty-eight deals each, or actually 749 hands played, out of the 784 opportunities to play.

This works out at an average of almost exactly 16 1/2 points a deal, as the total number of points gained by these four players was 48,456 in the 749 hands they played. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with duplicate scoring methods it should be explained that these are plus scores over averages, not actual points won.

If the average score made at seven tables is 560 and one pair gets 985, they are 425 plus. That is, their play shows a gain of 425 more points than the general run of players in the club could get out of the same cards. If a player who has gained 425 one evening is 75 below average the next session, his score to date is only 350. If each player on a team of four can gain an average of 16 1/2 points a deal, the team will pick up 65 points between them when opposed to average players.

When one sits down to play with persons who have different, and especially conflicting, ideas of the bidding, misunderstandings are bound to arise and to prove costly to the combination. Until one starts to figure it out, the author of complications that can arise after the first declaration by the dealer, assuming that to be made upon strictly conventional lines, is hardly credible.

The result of such a calculation will show that 900 different things may happen after the first bid has been made, and that all of these 900 are within the first round of bids. This conclusion has been arrived at by the following process:

There are six different bids open to the dealer; four suits, a no-trump and a pass. The dealer having picked one of the six, the second hand may choose any one of the remaining five or may double. This gives us 6 times 6, or 36 varieties.

Then the third hand can do any one of the five things the second hand does not do, or he can redouble. The redouble being rare, we will have 5 times 36 positions, or 180 different situations that may come up the fourth hand.

He can pick any one of the five that the third hand did not do, so that there are five more variations open to him after the third hand has brought it up to one of 180. This gives us 900 possible combinations of bids before it gets to the dealer for the second round.

This naturally suggests to the average mind the practical impossibility of any person's knowing the exact thing that is going to happen in a game of bridge with some millions of different combinations of cards possible. It also suggests that every player should have a correct idea of what his partner's reasons are for selecting the one of five or six bids that are open to him each time.

If he can achieve that and make the correct response every time he is a wonder. Making due allowance for the times that he will be thrown out of his calculations by the opponents' bids he will be a very dangerous adversary and a very desirable partner if he can hit it three times out of four.

The writer has never seen a duplicate match in which at least one third of the hands were not played upon different declarations by the two pairs who were considered to be the best in the room. The variation could usually be traced to the interference of the opponents' bids, but the custom in clubs is to treat the best players at N and S at table 1, and the next best at table 2. It is an easy matter to sit between these two tables and watch what they do with the same cards. If a hand is particularly interesting it may be followed further down the line.

Nine times out of ten there will be no reason to criticize the winning declaration arrived at in each case, although it may be totally different at the two tables. The preceding bids upon which the final declaration is based have followed different paths, there being 900 to select from. It is sometimes astonishing how greatly a trifling difference in a bid may influence the final declaration.

Take this hand, which was played at one of the closing sessions at the Knickerbocker. Three of the leading pairs in the club arrived at three different declarations on the same cards.

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